Oil Landscapes

Step by Step

WENDON BLAKE

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Published in Canada by General Publishing Company, Ltd., 30 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Toronto, Ontario.

Bibliographical Note

This Dover edition, first published in 2001, is an abridged, slightly corrected republication of the work originally published in 1979 by Watson-Guptill Publications, Inc., a division of Billboard Publications, Inc., New York, under the title *Landscapes in Oil*, as Part 2 of *The Oil Painting Book* in the series The Artist's Painting Library. The Dover edition includes 7 of the original 10 step-by-step demonstration sequences, and all other text from the original edition, accompanied by full-color reproductions of 63 paintings by George Cherepov and by 54 black-and-white reproductions of drawings, paintings, and photographs from the original edition.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Blake, Wendon.
[Oil painting book. 2. Landscapes in oil]
Oil landscapes step by step / Wendon Blake.
p. cm.
"An abridged, slightly corrected republication of the work originally published in 1979 by Watson-Guptill Publications . . . under the title Landscapes in oil, as part 2 of The oil painting book in the series The artists's painting library"—T.p. verso.
ISBN 0-486-41527-9 (pbk.)
1. Landscape painting—Technique. I. Title.

ND1342 .B5622 2001
751.45'436—dc21

00-052294

Manufactured in the United States of America
Dover Publications, Inc., 31 East 2nd Street, Mineola, N.Y. 11501

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Landscapes in Oil. Whether you paint outdoors or indoors—or both—painting landscapes in oil is a great delight. Oil paint is amazingly versatile. If you enjoy working on location, you can pack all your tubes and brushes, your palette, plus a few canvas boards into a compact paintbox that's no bigger than a small valise. This box becomes a kind of traveling studio. Flip open the lid—which stands up to function as your easel—and you're ready to paint anywhere. If you're a quick and impulsive painter, you can work with decisive strokes and finish a landscape in a few hours, right on the spot. If you prefer to work more slowly and deliberately, you can start a painting on the spot and finish the picture at home; because oil paint takes several days to dry, the colors on the canvas remain soft and pliable, giving you plenty of time to complete the landscape at your leisure. Or if you'd rather start *and* finish a painting in the comfort of home, you can always make some quick oil sketches on location and then take these indoors to use as reference material for a larger, more ambitious painting. Oil paint will always adapt itself to your personality and your working habits.

Indoors or Outdoors. Although some people are outdoor painters and others are indoor painters, it's important to remember that the best landscape paintings always *start* outdoors, even if they're finished in the studio. The only way to learn how to paint a tree or a rock is to set up your paintbox right there in the meadow. There's no substitute for firsthand knowledge of your subject. Working on location will strengthen your powers of observation and train your visual memory. So it's important to spend as much time as you can painting on location, even if those paintings are nothing more than small, quick studies for larger paintings which you hope to develop indoors. Those outdoor paintings—no matter how rough and crude they may turn out to be—will have a freshness and authenticity that you can get only by looking straight at the subject. Then, if you want to use these outdoor paintings as the basis for more work indoors, your indoor paintings will have a feeling of reality that you can never get by painting from memory—or from a photograph.

Basic Techniques. *Oil Landscapes Step by Step* begins with a rapid review of basic techniques. First, you'll see how to use bristle brushes for a roughly textured subject such as the rugged forms of a cliff and rocks. Then you'll see how to combine stiff bristle brushes with more pliable softhair brushes to paint a subject—such as trees and grass—that combines rough brushwork with softer strokes. The Italian word *impasto* means thick paint and you'll see how the impasto technique is used to paint a mountainous landscape. When you paint in oils, it's usually a good idea to start out with thin color and gradually work your way toward thicker color: you'll see how this is done in a snowy landscape.

Color Sketches. Several pages of color sketches will give you some guidelines for painting the various colors of trees, skies, land, and water. You'll compare the very different greens of deciduous trees and evergreens, the hot colors of autumn and the more delicate colors of trees on an overcast day. You'll see how the color of the sky changes from a sunny day to a gray day. You may be surprised to discover how many different greens you can find in a landscape of meadows and hills, or how many different tones you can see in a sandy shore. And you'll see how the colors of water change as they reflect the surrounding landscape and the sky.

Painting Demonstrations. After looking at some close-ups of sections of various landscapes—which will show you various ways of handling color—you'll watch noted painter George Cherepov demonstrate, step by step, how to paint seven of the most popular landscape subjects. He begins with trees and other growing things: deciduous trees, a forest of evergreens, and a meadow with trees and wildflowers. Then he goes on to the big shapes of the landscape: mountains. He shows you how to paint two different kinds of skies: a sunny sky filled with puffy clouds, and the dramatic shapes and colors of a sunset. He concludes with a pond filled with the reflections of trees. Each step of these demonstrations is shown in color.

Special Problems. Following these painting demonstrations, you'll find guidance on selecting landscape subjects and you'll find some rules of thumb for composing effective landscapes. You'll learn how the direction of the light can radically change the look of trees or mountains—or any other subject. You'll see how linear and aerial perspective can enhance the sense of space in your landscape paintings. Demonstration paintings of a gnarled tree and a hilly landscape will show how your brushstrokes can create a feeling of texture or three-dimensional form. You'll observe how expressive brushwork can emphasize the unique character of the subject, whether it's a cloud formation or a forest. And the book concludes with suggestions about painting the diverse forms of trees, certainly one of the most common landscape elements throughout the world.

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Color Selection. When you walk into an art supply store, you'll probably be dazzled by the number of different colors you can buy. There are far more tube colors than any artist can use. In reality, all the paintings in this book were done with just a dozen colors, about the average number used by most professionals. The colors listed below are really enough for a lifetime of painting. You'll notice that most colors are in pairs: two blues, two reds, two yellows, two browns. One member of each pair is bright, the other is subdued, giving you the greatest possible range of color mixtures.

Blues. Ultramarine blue is a dark, subdued hue with a faint hint of violet. Phthalocyanine blue is much more brilliant and has surprising tinting strength—which means that just a little goes a long way when you mix it with another color. So add phthalocyanine blue very gradually. These two blues will do almost every job. But George Cherepov likes to keep a tube of cobalt blue handy for painting skies and flesh tones; this is a beautiful, very delicate blue, which you can consider an "optional" color.

Reds. Cadmium red light is a fiery red with a hint of orange. All cadmium colors have tremendous tinting strength, so remember to add them to mixtures just a bit at a time. Alizarin crimson is a darker red and has a slightly violet cast.

Yellows. Cadmium yellow light is a dazzling, sunny yellow with tremendous tinting strength, like all the cadmiums. Yellow ochre is a soft, tannish tone. If your art supply store carries two shades of yellow ochre, buy the lighter one.

Browns. Burnt umber is a dark, somber brown. Burnt sienna is a coppery brown with a suggestion of orange.

Green. Although nature is full of greens—and so is your art supply store—you can mix an extraordinary variety of greens with the colors on your palette. But it *is* convenient to have just one green available in a tube. The most useful green is a bright, clear hue called viridian.

Black and White. The standard black, used by almost every oil painter, is ivory black. Buy either zinc white or titanium white; there's very little difference between them except for their chemical content. Be sure to buy the biggest tube of white sold in the store; you'll use lots of it.

Linseed Oil. Although the color in the tubes already contains linseed oil, the manufacturer adds only enough oil to produce a thick paste that you squeeze out in little mounds around the edge of your palette. When you start to paint, you'll probably prefer more fluid color. So buy a bottle of linseed oil and pour some into that little metal cup (or "dipper") clipped to the edge of your palette. You can then dip your brush into the oil, pick up some paint on the tip of the brush, and blend oil and paint together on your palette to produce the consistency you want.

Turpentine. Buy a big bottle of turpentine for two purposes. You'll want to fill that second metal cup, clipped to the edge of your palette, so that you can add a few drops of turpentine to the mixture of paint and linseed oil. This will make the paint even more fluid. The more turpentine you add, the more liquid the paint will become. Some oil painters like to premix linseed oil and turpentine, 50-50, in a bottle to make a thinner *painting medium*, as it's called. They keep the medium in one palette cup and pure turpentine in the other. For cleaning your brushes as you paint, pour some more turpentine into a jar about the size of your hand and keep this jar near the palette. Then, when you want to rinse out the color on your brush and pick up a fresh color, you simply swirl the brush around in the turpentine and wipe the bristles on a newspaper.

Painting Mediums. The simplest painting medium is the traditional 50-50 blend of linseed oil and turpentine. Many painters are satisfied to thin their paint with that medium for the rest of their lives. On the other hand, art supply stores do sell other mediums that you might like to try. Three of the most popular are damar, copal, and mastic painting mediums. These are usually a blend of a natural resin—called damar, copal, or mastic, as you might expect—plus some linseed oil and some turpentine. The resin is really a kind of varnish that adds luminosity to the paint and makes it dry more quickly. Once you've tried the traditional linseed oil-turpentine combination, you might like to experiment with one of the resinous mediums.

Other Solvents. If you can't get turpentine, you'll find that mineral spirits (the British call it white spirit) is a good alternative. You can use it to thin your colors and also to rinse your brushes as you work. Some painters use kerosene (called paraffin in Britain) for cleaning their brushes, but it's flammable and has a foul odor. Avoid it.

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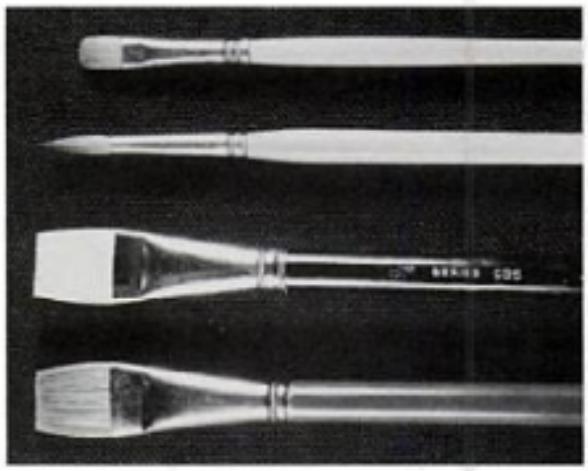
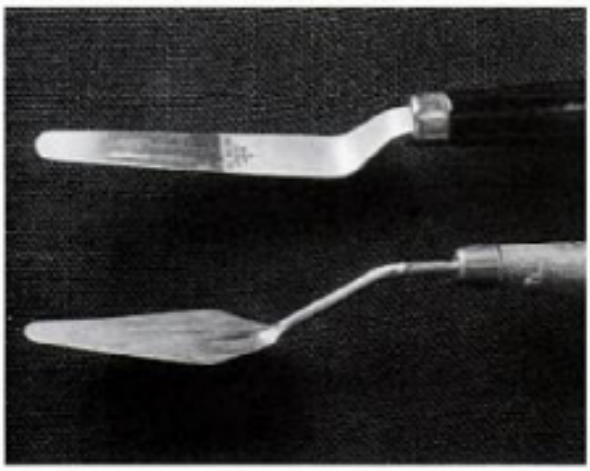
Bristle Brushes. The brushes most commonly used for oil painting are made of stiff, white hog bristles. The filbert (top) is long and springy, comes to a slightly rounded tip, and makes a soft stroke. The flat (center) is also long and springy, but it has a squarish tip and makes a more precise, rectangular stroke. The bright (bottom) also has a squarish tip and makes a rectangular stroke, but it's short and stiff, digging deeper into the paint and leaving a strongly textured stroke.



Softhair Brushes. Although bristle brushes do most of the work in oil painting, it's helpful to have some softhair brushes for smoother, more precise brushwork. The top two brushes here are sables: a small, flat brush that makes smooth, rectangular strokes; and a round, pointed brush that makes fluent lines for sketching in the picture and adding linear details such as leaves, branches, or eyebrows. At the bottom is an oxhair brush, and just above it is a soft, white nylon brush; both make broad, smooth, squarish strokes.



Knives. A palette knife (top) is useful for mixing color on the palette, for scraping color off the palette at the end of a painting session, and for scraping color off the canvas when you're dissatisfied with what you've done and want to make a fresh start. A painting knife (bottom) has a very thin, flexible blade that's specially designed for spreading color on the canvas.

Brush Washer. To clean your brush as you paint, rinse it in turpentine or mineral spirits (called white spirit in Britain). To create a convenient brush washer, save an empty food tin after you've removed the top; turn the tin over so that the bottom faces up; then punch holes in the bottom with a pointed metal tool. Drop the tin into a wide-mouthed jar—with the perforated bottom of the tin facing up. Fill the jar with solvent. When you rinse your brush, the discarded paint sinks through the holes to the bottom of the jar; the solvent above the tin remains fairly clean.

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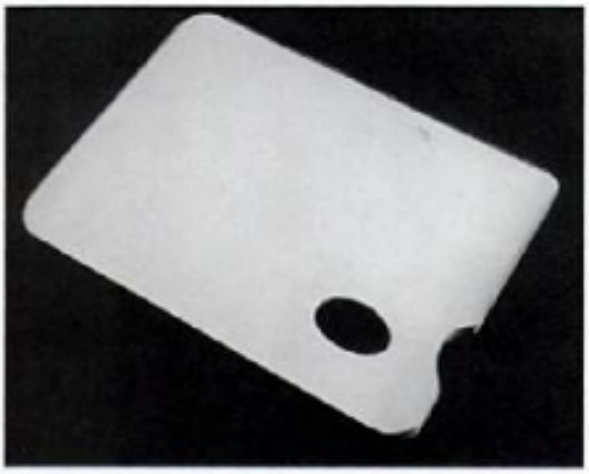
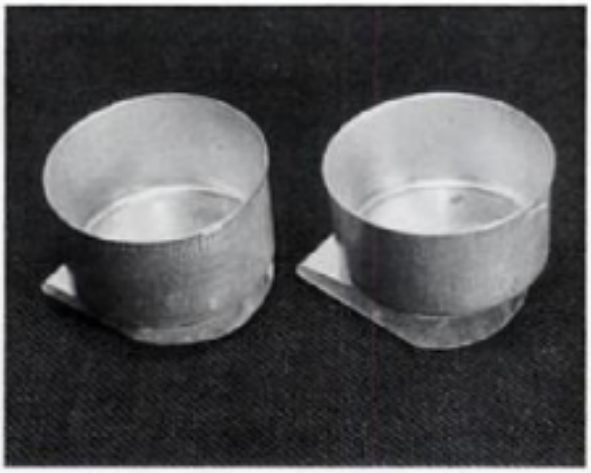
Easel. For working indoors, a wooden studio easel is convenient. Your canvas board, stretched canvas, or gesso panel is held upright by wooden "grippers" that slide up and down to fit the size of the painting. They also adjust to match your own height. A studio easel should be the heaviest and sturdiest you can afford, so that it won't wobble when you attack the painting with vigorous strokes. For working outdoors, you can get a lightweight, collapsible, tripod easel; to keep it steady in the wind, some professionals sharpen the three legs and drive them into the ground.

Paintbox. A paintbox usually contains a wooden palette that you can lift out and hold as you paint. Beneath the palette, the lower half of the box contains compartments for tubes, brushes, knives, bottles of oil and turpentine, and other accessories. The lid of the paintbox often has grooves into which you can slide two or three canvas boards. The open lid will stand upright—with the help of a supporting metal strip which you see at the right—and can serve as an easel when you paint outdoors.



Palette. The wooden palette that comes inside your paintbox is the traditional mixing surface that artists have used for centuries. A convenient alternative is the paper tear-off palette: sheets of oilproof paper that are bound together like a sketchpad. You mix your colors on the top sheet, which you then tear off and discard at the end of the painting day, leaving a fresh sheet for the next painting session. This takes a lot less time than cleaning a wooden palette. Many artists also find it easier to mix colors on the white surface of the paper palette than on the brown surface of the wooden palette.



Palette Cups. These two metal cups (or dippers) have gripping devices along the bottom so that you can clamp the cups over the edges of your palette. One cup is for turpentine or mineral spirits to thin your paint as you work. (Don't use this cup for rinsing your brush; that's what the brush washer is for.) The other cup is for your painting medium. This can be pure linseed oil; a 50-50 blend of linseed oil and turpentine that you mix yourself; or a painting medium that you buy in the art supply store—usually a blend of linseed oil, turpentine, and a resin such as damar, copal, or mastic.

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Cliff and Rocks. The stiff, white hoghairs of a bristle brush are best for broad, rough strokes, which usually show the marks of the bristles. If you use the paint straight from the tube—adding little or no painting medium—the color has a thick, pasty consistency. A stiff bristle brush, loaded with stiff color, is particularly effective for painting roughly textured subjects such as a rock formation. If you add a little painting medium to make the tube color more fluid, the paint becomes creamier and you can make softer strokes like those in the sky at the upper right. Oil painters generally do most of their work with bristle brushes, covering the canvas with big, broad strokes.

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Trees, Near and Far. Like the rocks on the preceding page, these trees are begun with broad strokes of a bristle brush. However, the paint is diluted with medium to a more fluid consistency, so that the brush makes a softer, smoother stroke, which you can see most clearly in the shadow side of the foreground tree. The hoghairs still leave a distinct mark in the paint, but the stroke isn't nearly as rough. On top of the big strokes of the bristle brush, the tip of a round, softhair brush does the more detailed work. The softhair brush adds the paler touches of the leaves in sunlight, the linear strokes of the branches, the vertical shadow strokes on the sunlit treetrunk, and the scribbly strokes of the grass beneath the trees. The slender, delicate hairs of the softhair brush won't carry as much thick paint as the bristle brush. Softhair brushes work best with fluid paint, so add plenty of medium.

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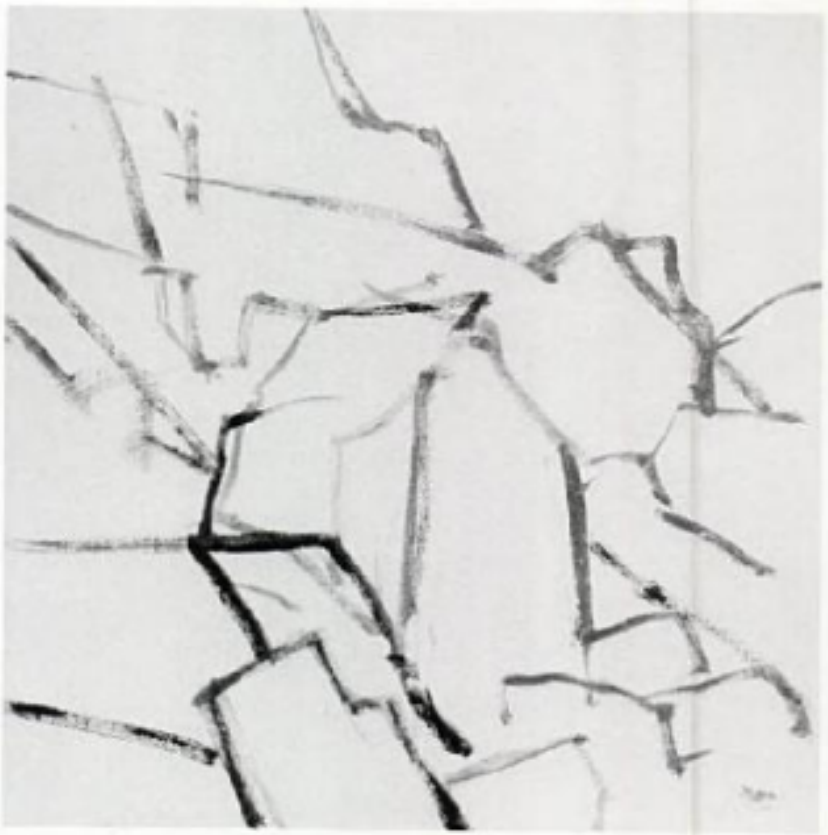
Step 1. The shapes of the cliffs and rocks are drawn with straight strokes of a small filbert carrying paint that's diluted with turpentine to a very fluid consistency. Undiluted tube color is too thick for drawing lines, so you've got to add turpentine or medium.



Step 2. A larger bristle brush picks up some slightly thicker color diluted with just enough medium to make the paint flow smoothly. Then the dark shadow sides of the cliff and rocks are painted with broad strokes. Notice how the texture of the canvas board breaks up the strokes, which begin to suggest the roughness of the rocks.

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Step 3. Now the sunlit faces of the boulders and the cliff are painted with undiluted tube color. This stiff paint is applied with the short, stiff bristles of a bright, which makes a stroke that has a particularly rough texture. The paint is so thick that it doesn't cover the canvas in smooth, even strokes. You can see that the strokes are ragged and irregular. On the face of the big rock at the center, the weave of the canvas breaks up the stroke to accentuate the rocky texture.

Step 4. For the softer, more fluid strokes of the sky, a large filbert picks up much creamier paint, diluted with medium to a more fluid consistency than the rocks. You can still see the brushstrokes, but they're softer and less distinct. For details such as the dark cracks, the point of a round, softhair brush adds a few dark strokes of very fluid color containing plenty of medium. Finally, a bright adds some thick strokes of undiluted color to strengthen the sunlit tops of the rocks.

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Step 1. For drawing the complex curves of the foliage and the delicate shapes of the trunks and branches of these trees, a round, softhair brush will do a more precise job than a bristle brush. The color is thinned with turpentine to the consistency of watercolor. Then the tip of the brush moves smoothly over the surface of the canvas, making crisp, graceful lines.

Step 2. To block in the darks of the foliage, a large filbert picks up a fluid mixture of tube color and painting medium. The bristle brush scrubs in the tones with broad strokes that retain the marks of the stiff hoghairs and suggest the texture of the foliage. Notice the small, rough strokes which really begin to look like leaves at the top of the tree.

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Step 3. The filbert completes the large shapes of the foliage with broad strokes of fluid color containing a lot of painting medium. Then the tip of a round, softhair brush adds precise, linear strokes for the sunlit and shadow sides of the trunk and branches. The shadow strokes are precisely drawn with fluid color containing enough medium to make the paint flow smoothly.

Step 4. A flat, softhair brush picks up fluid color to complete the distant tree with soft, smooth strokes that blend the lights and darks and soften the edges of the leafy masses. Then the tip of a round, softhair brush picks up a slightly thicker mixture of tube color and painting medium to dash in the sunlit leaves with small, quick strokes. The same brush paints the sunlit sides of the trunks and branches with long, slender strokes of this creamy mixture. Then, picking up more fluid color, a round brush scribbles the shadowy grass at the bases of the trees.

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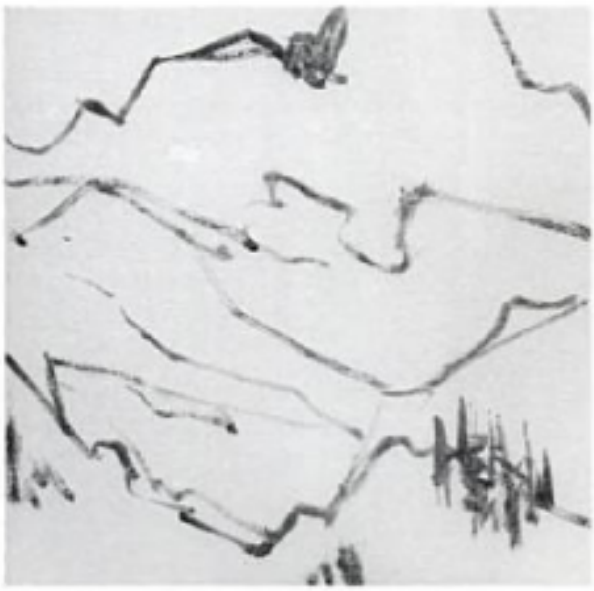
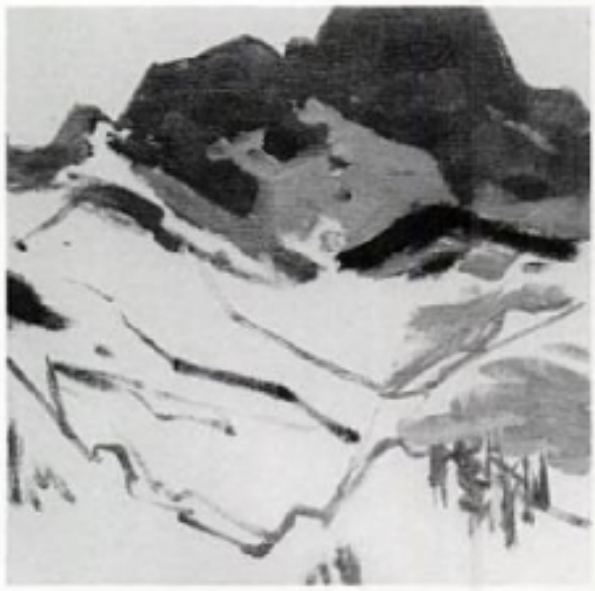


Step 1. This picture will be completed with thick color—for which painters use the Italian word *impasto*—but the shapes are first drawn with precise strokes of fluid color. The tip of a round softhair brush defines the mountains and the trees with tube color thinned with turpentine to the consistency of watercolor.



Step 2. Now the dark shapes of the distant mountains at the horizon are painted with a creamy mixture of tube color and painting medium. The shadowy patch of snow is painted with slightly thicker color—tube color and a little less painting medium. At this stage, all the work is done with bristle brushes.

Step 3. The shadowy patches of snow in the foreground are painted with a bristle brush that carries color diluted to the consistency of thick cream. The *really* thick color is saved for the sunlit patches of snow, which are pure tube color undiluted with painting medium and applied in solid, heavy strokes. A round softhair brush adds small, dark touches such as the trees.

Step 4. To add some strokes of shadow to the sunlit snow, a bristle brush digs back into the thick, wet color applied in Step 3. Then the foreground is completed with strokes made by a round, softhair brush. The strategy of this painting is worth remembering. The most distant shapes are painted with smooth, fairly thin color. The thick color is saved for the sunlit foreground.

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Step 1. Most oil painters make it a standard practice to begin with thin color—diluted with lots of turpentine or painting medium—and gradually introduce thicker color as the painting progresses. This snowy landscape begins with a brush drawing in very thin color diluted with turpentine. The preliminary shapes are drawn with the tip of a round softhair brush.

Step 2. Still working with fluid paint—tube color diluted with painting medium and a little turpentine—a bristle brush adds the shadow tones on the snow-covered trees, plus the dark shape of the trees in the distance. A pale tone is also brushed across the sky, while a strip of shadow is brushed across the foreground.

Step 3. Working with slightly thicker color diluted with medium to the consistency of thick cream, a bristle brush paints the sunlit patches on the snow-covered trees and the foreground. Then a round, softhair brush begins to add the darks with strokes of fluid color a little thicker than the color used in Step 2, but not as thick as the sunlit snow.

Step 4. Following the same strategy that was used for painting the mountains, the thickest strokes are saved for the very end. Now the paint is really piled on with a bristle brush to solidify the shapes of the snow on the trees and on the ground. And a round, softhair brush adds creamy strokes to suggest snow on the branches of the dark tree.

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Buying Brushes. There are three rules for buying brushes. First, buy the best you can afford—even if you can afford only a few. Second, buy big brushes, not little ones; big brushes encourage you to work in bold strokes. Third, buy brushes in pairs, roughly the same size. For example, if you're painting a sky, you can probably use one big brush for the patches of blue and the gray shadows on the clouds, but you'll want another brush, unsullied by blue or gray, to paint the white areas of the clouds.

Recommended Brushes. Begin with a couple of really big bristle brushes, around 1" (25 mm) wide for painting your largest color areas. You might want to try two different shapes: one can be a flat, while the other might be a filbert. And one might be just a bit smaller than the other. The numbering systems of manufacturers vary, but you'll probably come reasonably close if you buy a number 12 and a number 11. Then you'll need two or three bristle brushes about half this size, numbers 7 and 8 in the catalogs of most brush manufacturers. Again, try a flat, a filbert, and perhaps a bright. For painting smoother passages, details, and lines, three softhair brushes are useful: one that's about 1/2" (13 mm) wide; one that's about half this wide; and a pointed, round brush that's about 1/8" or 3/16" (3-5 mm) thick at the widest point.

Knives. For mixing colors on the palette and for scraping a wet canvas when you want to make a correction, a palette knife is essential. Many oil painters prefer to mix colors with the knife. If you'd like to *paint* with a knife, don't use the palette knife. Instead, buy a painting knife, with a short, flexible, diamond-shaped blade.

Painting Surfaces. When you're starting to paint in oil, you can buy inexpensive canvas boards at any art supply store. These are canvas coated with white paint and glued to sturdy cardboard in standard sizes that will fit into your paintbox. Later, you can buy stretched canvas—sheets of canvas, precoated with white paint and nailed to a rectangular frame made of wooden stretcher bars. You can save money by stretching your own canvas. You buy the stretcher bars and canvas, then assemble them yourself. If you like to paint on a smooth surface, buy sheets of hardboard and coat them with acrylic gesso, a thick, white paint that you buy in cans or jars, then thin with water.

Easel. An easel is helpful, but not essential. It's just a wooden framework with two "grippers" that hold the canvas upright while you paint. The "grippers" slide up and down to fit larger or smaller paintings—and to match your height. If you'd rather not invest in an easel, there's nothing wrong with hammering a few nails partway into the wall and resting your painting on them; if the heads of the nails overlap the edges of the painting, they'll hold it securely. Most paintboxes have lids with grooves to hold canvas boards. When you flip the lid upright, the lid becomes your easel.

Paintbox. To store your painting equipment and to carry your gear outdoors, a wooden paintbox is a great convenience. The box has compartments for brushes, knives, tubes, small bottles of oil and turpentine, and other accessories. It usually holds a palette—plus some canvas boards inside the lid.

Palette. A wooden paintbox often comes with a wooden palette. Rub the palette with several coats of linseed oil to make the surface smooth, shiny, and nonabsorbent. When the oil is dry, the palette won't soak up your tube colors and the surface will be easy to clean at the end of the painting day. Even more convenient is a paper palette. This looks like a sketch-pad, but the pages are nonabsorbent paper. At the beginning of the painting day, you squeeze out your colors on the top sheet. When you're finished, you just tear off and discard the top sheet. Paper palettes come in standard sizes that fit into paintboxes.

Odds and Ends. To hold your turpentine and your painting medium—which might be plain linseed oil or one of the mixtures you read about earlier—buy two metal palette cups (or "dippers"). To sketch the composition on your canvas before you start to paint, buy a few sticks of natural charcoal—not charcoal pencils or compressed charcoal. Keep a clean rag handy to dust off the charcoal and make the lines paler before you start to paint. Some smooth, absorbent, lint-free rags are good for wiping mistakes off your painting surface. Paper towels or a stack of old newspapers (a lot cheaper than paper towels) are essential for wiping your brush when you've rinsed it in turpentine. For stretching your own canvas, buy a hammer (preferably with a magnetic head), some nails or carpet tacks about 3/8" (9-10 mm) long, scissors, and a ruler.

Work Layout. Before you start to paint, lay out your equipment in a consistent way, so that everything is always in its place when you reach for it. If you're right-handed, place the palette on a tabletop to your right, along with a jar of turpentine, your rags and newspapers or paper towels, and a clean jar in which you store your brushes, hair end up. Establish a fixed location for each color on your palette. One good way is to place your *cool* colors (black, blue, green) along one edge and the *warm* colors (yellow, orange, red, brown) along another edge. Put a big dab of white in one corner, where it won't be contaminated.

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Deciduous Trees. To paint trees in bright sunlight, try mixing phthalocyanine blue or viridian with cadmium yellow to get brilliant greens, or ultramarine blue with cadmium yellow for greens which are slightly more subdued but still sunny. Here, the sunstruck foliage and grass are ultramarine blue, cadmium yellow, and a little white; the shadow areas are ultramarine blue and yellow ochre.

Evergreens. Pines, spruces, and other evergreens tend to be deeper shades of green than deciduous trees. To darken a mixture of phthalocyanine blue or ultramarine blue and cadmium yellow, add burnt umber, burnt sienna, or ivory black. Phthalocyanine blue and yellow ochre will give you particularly deep green, which grows smoky and mysterious when you add some white—perfect for distant evergreens or evergreens in mist.

Autumn Trees. The hot colors of autumn call for brilliant colors such as cadmium yellow or cadmium red, but it's best to subdue them slightly with more muted colors such as yellow ochre, burnt umber, and burnt sienna. The yellow tree is cadmium yellow, burnt sienna, and white. The orange tone in the background is cadmium yellow, cadmium red, yellow ochre, and white.

Trees on Overcast Day. On a gray day, even the bright colors of autumn are subdued. The warm tones of the foreground tree and the grass are mixtures of viridian, yellow ochre, burnt sienna, and white. The distant trees, melting away into the atmosphere, are mixtures of ultramarine blue, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, and white.

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Sunny Sky. The sky is usually darkest at the zenith, growing paler at the horizon. Don't just mix blue and white. Try adding a touch of yellow ochre or alizarin crimson for warmth, or perhaps viridian to make the blue cooler and brighter. This sky is mainly cobalt blue and white, with a slight hint of yellow ochre and alizarin crimson. The clouds are also this mixture, but with less blue.

Overcast Day. An overcast sky is full of subtle color. Try mixing one of your blues (ultramarine, phthalocyanine, or cobalt) with one of your browns (burnt umber or burnt sienna) and plenty of white to produce a great variety of beautiful warm and cool grays. Add a touch of yellow ochre for a more golden tone. This cloudy sky is painted with mixtures of cobalt blue, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, and white.

Meadows and Hills. This landscape contains a surprising variety of green mixtures: various combinations of ultramarine blue or viridian, cadmium yellow or yellow ochre, burnt sienna, and white for the lighter areas; various blends of phthalocyanine blue, cadmium yellow or yellow ochre, and burnt umber for the darks. For contrast, it's a good idea to exaggerate the blueness of the distant hills.

Sand in Light and Shadow. Look closely at a sandy beach and you'll see that it isn't nearly as yellow or gold as most beginners paint it. The sunlit areas of these dunes are mostly yellow ochre and white, heightened with delicate touches of cadmium yellow and burnt sienna. The shadows tend to reflect the cool tone of the sky—mixtures of cobalt blue, yellow ochre, alizarin crimson, and white.

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Pond in Sunlight. Water has no color of its own. Outdoors, the water acts like a mirror, reflecting the color of the surrounding sky and landscape. That's why most of this pond is painted with the same colors as the sky: cobalt blue, yellow ochre, alizarin crimson, and white. For the same reason, the water below the big willow is painted with the same mixtures used to render the tree.

Pond in Deep Woods. Surrounded by dark woods, a pond reflects very little sky color. Instead, the water picks up the colors of the surrounding trees. At the very top, a few patches of sky break through the trees, and these sky colors are reflected in a few streaks and ripples that break the water.

Rocky Stream. A turbulent stream is a particularly complicated combination of colors. Much of this stream reflects the tones of the surrounding rocks. You can see some cooler strokes that reflect the cooler tone of the sky—although the blue zenith of the sky is too far up to include in the picture. In the immediate foreground, the shallow water reveals the darker tone of the bed of the stream.

Smooth Stream. Calm water is an almost perfect reflecting surface. Look carefully at this placid stream, and you'll see reflections of the trunks and foliage along the shore, plus a clearly defined patch of sky color in the lower right area. The lesson is clear: don't try to mix some imaginary "water color," but paint water as a reflecting surface that mirrors its surroundings.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 1. The preliminary brush drawing defines the trees as two big, simple shapes. A round softhair brush swiftly glides around the edges of the foliage with a mixture of burnt umber, viridian, and lots of turpentine to make the color flow as smoothly as watercolor. The shapes of the foliage aren't defined *too* precisely. These strokes will soon be covered by thicker color—and that will be the time to render the masses of foliage more exactly.

Step 2. A small bristle brush is used to paint the dark strokes of the trunk and branches with a mixture of viridian, burnt sienna, and white. The strokes are still very loose and casual—the forms will be more precisely painted in the final stages. Then a bristle brush begins to paint the foliage with a mixture of viridian, yellow ochre, and the slightest hint of cadmium red to add a touch of warmth. The strokes already begin to reflect the character of the subject: long, rhythmic strokes for the trunk and branches; short, ragged strokes of thicker color (diluted with less medium) to suggest the texture of the leaves.

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Step 3. A bristle brush works its way down to cover the foliage area with short, ragged strokes of viridian, yellow ochre, a hint of cadmium red, and white in the sunlit areas. Then the shadows among the foliage are painted with viridian and burnt sienna, a mixture which also appears in the shadow at the base of the tree. A softhair brush defines the trunk more precisely, using the same mixture that first appeared in Step 2, then adds some shadow strokes with phthalocyanine blue and burnt sienna. A bristle brush begins to suggest the rocks at the bottom of the picture with this same phthalocyanine blue/burnt sienna mixture, adding white for the sunlit planes of the rocks.

Step 4. The sky is painted around the trees with short strokes that overlap one another. The first strokes are cobalt blue and white. These are overlaid with strokes of alizarin crimson and white, and strokes of yellow ochre and white. The action of the brush blends these three tones—but there's no attempt to fuse the strokes into one smooth, continuous tone. Notice how the strokes at the top of the sky are darkest and bluest, growing warmer and paler toward the horizon. Also observe how patches of sky break through the foliage of the big tree.

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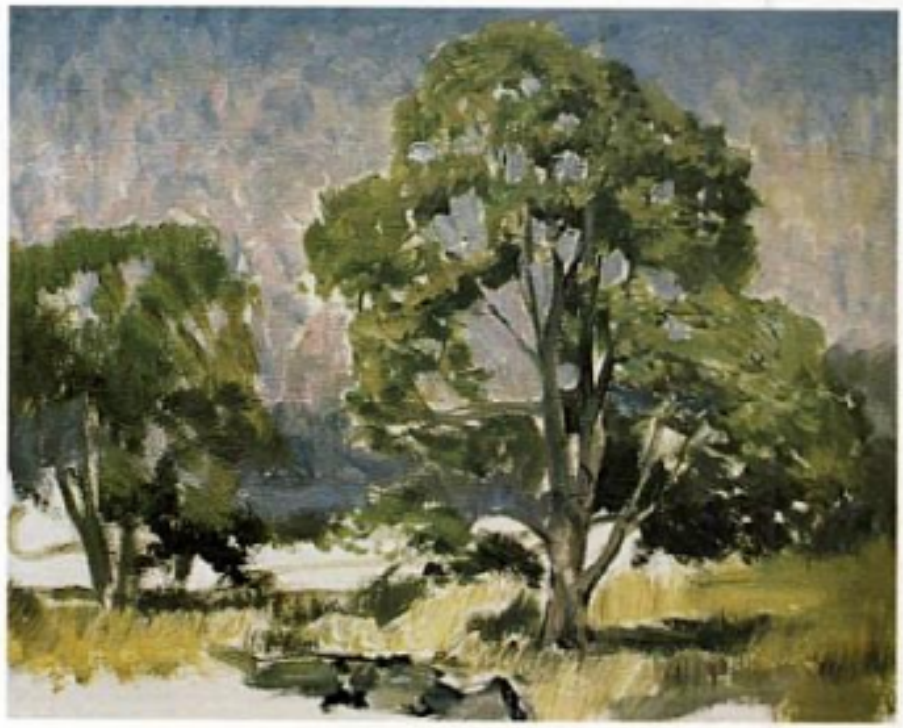
Step 5. The sky strokes have obscured the brush lines that defined the smaller tree at the left, so now this tree is rebuilt with strokes of the same foliage mixture as was used on the big tree. A bristle brush goes over the sky with short strokes, partially blending the colors that were applied in Step 4, but still allowing each stroke to show. Then the sky mixture—with more blue—is used to paint a darker tone along the horizon. This tone will eventually become the distant hills. The grassy meadow is begun with scrubby, casual strokes of viridian, cadmium yellow, burnt sienna, and white.



Step 6. The sky is completed with short, diagonal strokes that eliminate the patches of bare canvas. Then the foliage of the big tree is enriched with thick strokes of viridian, cadmium yellow, white, and the slightest touch of burnt sienna—emphasizing the brilliant sunlight. This same mixture brightens the meadow. Between the two trees, broad strokes of sky mixture sharpen the top of the distant hill. All this work has been done with bristle brushes. Now a round, soft-hair brush paints the lights and shadows on the trunks and branches with the original mixtures used in Step 2 and 3, adding more white for the strokes of sunlight. This same brush begins to add dark touches to suggest leaves.

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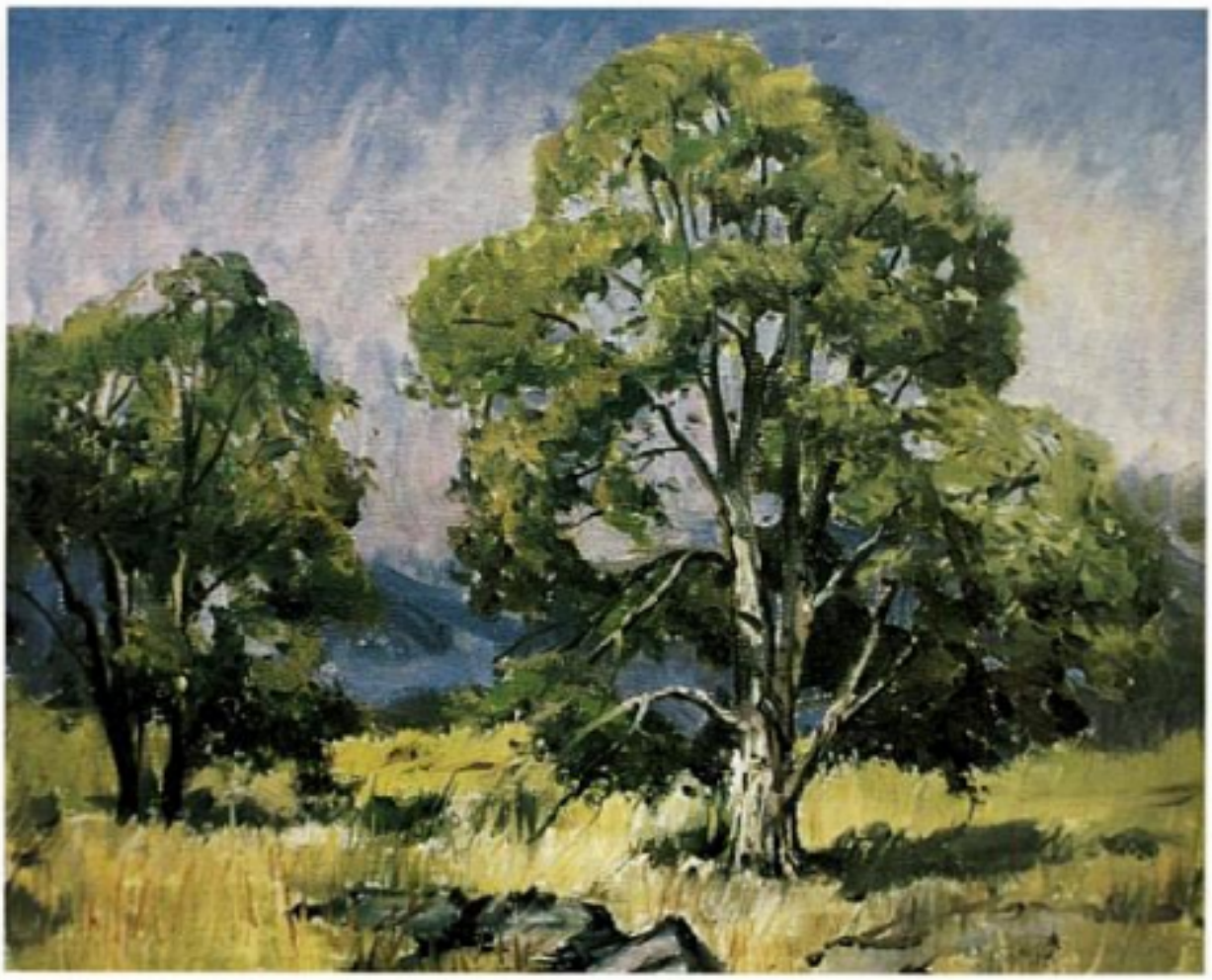

Step 7. It's always important to paint with broad, free strokes until the very end of the picture—when the last few details are added with smaller, more precise strokes. In this final stage, a bristle brush completes the foliage of the smaller tree with broad strokes of viridian and yellow ochre warmed with a speck of burnt sienna and lightened with white. This same tone covers the rest of the meadow. Then the tip of a round, softhair brush goes to work on those last details that give the painting a sense of completeness. The dark trunks of the smaller tree are flowing, rhythmic strokes of phthalocyanine blue and burnt sienna diluted with painting medium to fluid consistency that's just right for linear brushwork. The same brush adds more dark strokes to the trunk and branches of the bigger tree. Then the brush is rinsed out in turpentine, quickly dried on a sheet of newspaper, and dipped into a mixture of burnt umber, yellow, and white to strengthen the lighted patches on the bark. The point of the brush adds a few more dark touches among the trees to suggest individual leaves—but not too many. The round brush sharpens the shapes of the rocks with the shadow mixture that was used on the trunks. Then the tip of the brush scribbles vertical and diagonal strokes over the meadow to suggest grasses and weeds—pale strokes of white faintly tinted with cadmium yellow, plus darker strokes of viridian, burnt sienna, and yellow ochre. The finished painting contains just enough of these details to seem "real," but not enough detail to become distracting. The painting is still dominated by bold, free, broad brushwork.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 1. An evergreen forest can be full of distracting detail, so it's essential to keep your eye on the big, simple shapes. Here, the preliminary brush drawing does nothing more than define the trunks of the most important trees in the foreground, the pointed shapes of the forest against the sky, the small tree at the left, the lines of the shore, and a single round tree on the distant shoreline. A round softhair brush draws these lines with burnt umber, ultramarine blue, and turpentine.

Step 2. Once the composition seems right, the same brush reinforces the original lines with darker strokes of burnt umber and ultramarine blue, but with less turpentine than was used in Step 1. Then the shapes of the big trunks are thickened with this mixture, since they'll become very important design elements—forming the "frame" through which you see the distant landscape.

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Step 3. To place the foreground close to the viewer, this area is covered with a rich, dark tone of cadmium yellow, burnt sienna, and ultramarine blue. Strokes of this mixture are carried upward over the small evergreen at the left—with more ultramarine blue added for the darks. Then the tone of the trees on the distant shore is begun with a soft, smoky mixture of yellow ochre, ivory black, and white. All the work is done with bristle brushes, and the color is diluted with painting medium to a smooth, fluid consistency.

Step 4. The distant forest is covered with broad strokes of creamy color diluted with enough painting medium to make the color flow smoothly. The brightest trees are cadmium yellow and a touch of ivory black; this mixture is carried downward into the water, and a few strokes are added to the foreground to suggest a patch of sunlight. The dark tree at the center is phthalocyanine blue and yellow ochre. The more muted trees are phthalocyanine blue, burnt umber, yellow ochre, and white. Strokes of the foreground mixture are carried upward into the tree trunks on the left; some cadmium yellow is added to suggest sunlight on the bark.

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Step 5. The sky is covered with liquid strokes of cobalt blue, alizarin crimson, yellow ochre, and white—defining the edges of the distant trees more sharply. Some of this sky color is brushed into the wet undertone of the distant trees to the right, which grow softer and cooler. The dark trunks in the foreground are more sharply defined by a round brush carrying a dark mixture of phthalocyanine blue and burnt sienna. The brush adds more darks to the small evergreen at the left and begins to add shadow lines to the ground. But something is wrong: the colors of the distant trees are too strong. They seem to be pushing their way into the foreground and need to be pushed back by a radical change in the color scheme.

Step 6. The distant trees are scraped lightly with the palette knife. Then soft, warm tones of burnt sienna, ultramarine blue, yellow ochre, and white are brushed over and into the wet tone to create a new, more unified color that stays further back in the picture. Behind the two big trunks at the left, some of the original yellow tone still shines through. The new color is carried down into the water, and some darker strokes of this mixture are added to the foreground. The bark and branches of the foreground trees are painted with dark strokes of phthalocyanine blue and burnt sienna. On the far shore, only one bright yellow tree remains.

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Step 7. The trees on the far shore have been unified by adding fresh color, but now they must be pushed further into the distance. Cool, delicate tones of cobalt blue, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, and white are blended into the wet color to make the distant trees look even more remote and subdued. Behind the tree trunks at the left, the yellow foliage is heightened with a bit more cadmium yellow, burnt umber and white; this mixture is repeated on the shoreline and carried down to the still water, which reflects the foliage above. In the foreground, thick strokes of this mixture, with an occasional dash of cadmium red, suggest patches of bright sunlight breaking through the trees. The tops of the nearby tree trunks are softened with strokes of the same cool mixture that appears on the distant trees in the upper right; this makes the tops of the trunks seem more shadowy and more remote. The dark edges of the foreground trees are sharpened with slender strokes of phthalocyanine blue and burnt sienna applied with the tip of a round softhair brush, which also adds more branches and twigs at this final stage. The patches of sunlight on the trunks are heightened with a few strokes of the cadmium yellow, burnt umber, and white mixture that appears on the ground. A small bristle brush adds a pale, warm cloud to the sky—mostly white, with a touch of cobalt blue and alizarin crimson—and then picks up the blue sky mixture to poke some "sky holes" through the foliage. The round softhair brush adds a few dark and light flecks to the ground, suggesting the usual debris of a forest—perhaps some fallen pine cones. The finished painting is an excellent example of the adaptability of oil paint, which remains wet and pliable longer than any other medium—permitting you to make major color changes by blending fresh color into the wet surface.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 1. As usual, the preliminary brush drawing is executed with a round softhair brush carrying a very fluid mixture of tube color diluted with lots of turpentine. Because the colors of this landscape will be generally cool, the brush drawing is done in ultramarine blue. The drawing is very simple: just the horizon line, the banks of the stream, the shapes of the foliage, and a few strokes for the trunks of the trees. The sky is brushed in with broad, rough strokes of cobalt blue, alizarin crimson, yellow ochre, and white—with more blue at the top and more yellow below. This sky tone is reflected in the stream.

Step 2. The trees at the horizon are so far away that they contain practically no detail, so they're painted as a broad mass of flat color. They're painted with the same mixture as the sky, but with more blue and less white. The colors aren't mixed too thoroughly; here and there you can see some yellow or pink shining through the blue. This makes the tone of the trees more lively and interesting.

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Step 5. To warm the grass in the lower left area, a bristle brush scrubs in some cadmium red and cadmium yellow. The up-and-down brushstrokes suggest the texture of the grass. Just to the left of the stump, some mountain color is blended into the middleground to suggest a shadowy ravine. More white and burnt sienna are added to the mountain mixture, which is brushed across the sunlit top of the fallen trunk. This same tone appears in the fallen twigs scattered across the grass. In the lower left area, a broken branch is painted in exactly the same way as the fallen trunk. The form and texture of the jagged stump are developed with this same mountain mixture, with more white.

Step 6. To suggest snow at the base of the dark mountain, a bristle brush applies thick strokes of white tinted with the slightest touch of ultramarine blue and burnt umber. A bristle brush completes the sunlit grass with viridian, yellow ochre, a little cadmium red, and white. The top of the fallen trunk—and the log in the lower left area—are enriched with thick strokes of the snow mixture. Then a round softhair brush picks up a darker version of the mountain mixture to add some evergreens to the middleground, another dark tree at the left, and some dark strokes to the foreground. To suggest sunlight on the new tree and grassy texture in the foreground, the brush adds strokes of the snow mixture.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 7. Here's where the soft, smooth, flowing stroke of a *flat* softhair brush lends its special magic. Until now, the patches of the sky have been still bare canvas. Now the flat softhair brush covers them with a smooth, fairly fluid mixture of yellow ochre, burnt sienna, and white, cooled with the slightest hint of phthalocyanine blue. Then, with more blue added to this mixture and the paint diluted with plenty of medium, the softhair brush adds a cloud to the sky in the upper left—and carries this cloud over the mountains. The cloud tone blends softly with the underlying mountain color. The softhair brush creates a more dramatic effect at the extreme right. The cloud tone is carried over the edge of the mountain and blended softly into the dark undertone with a back-and-forth motion of the brush; now the mountain seems to disappear into a mysterious mist. A bit of this color is also blended into the dark mountain just behind the shattered stump. Now the distant mountains really seem remote and dramatic. Moving into the middleground, a bristle brush adds some thick strokes of snow mixture—mostly white, with just a touch of ultramarine blue and burnt umber—to the right of the stump. As usual, the final touches of texture and detail are added by the tip of a round softhair brush. Here and there the brush adds a stroke of white—tinted with a little snow mixture—to strengthen the sunlit areas of the broken trees and branches in the foreground. Then the brush picks up a really dark mixture of phthalocyanine blue and burnt sienna to strike in the last few shadow lines beneath the trunks and branches, plus a few more textural details within the shadow side of the broken stump. In the finished painting, notice the effects of aerial perspective. The only sharp details and the strongest contrasts of light and shadow appear in the foreground. The middleground is painted with much simpler, broader strokes. And the distant mountains are painted with broad, flat strokes that emphasize the simplicity of the shapes and contain virtually no detail.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 5. Work begins on the bright patch of sky just above the horizon. A bristle brush paints thick, horizontal strokes of white, cadmium yellow, and just a little cadmium red beneath the clouds. Just above the peaks, a little more cadmium red is added. More strokes of this mixture fill the breaks within the lower edges of the clouds. Then this same mixture, with just a little more cadmium red, is repeated in the water, which now reflects the forms of the peaks, sky and clouds.

Step 6. Work continues simultaneously on the sky and water, since the same colors must appear in both. The upper sky—above and between the clouds—begins with smooth strokes of cobalt blue and white at the very top. Then, as the brush works downward toward the clouds, yellow ochre and more white are added to this mixture. This process is reversed in the water: cobalt blue and white appear at the lower edge, with more white and yellow ochre added as the brush moves upward. Bright touches of sunlight are added to the lower edge of the topmost cloud with thick strokes of cadmium yellow, cadmium red, and white. Then streaks of this mixture are added to the center of the bright sky.

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Step 7. At the end of Step 6, the canvas is completely covered with color. The main shapes and colors are established. But now it's time to refine these shapes and colors in the final stage. A large bristle brush moves up and down over the central band of clouds, sharpening their shapes with vertical strokes of the original mixture, sometimes lighter and sometimes darker, to create a distinct sense of light and shadow. A few horizontal strokes of this tone are added to suggest streaky clouds within the sunlit strip above the peaks. And the topmost cloud is darkened with this tone. Just as the dark clouds are redefined, so are the sunlit areas of the sky. A small bristle brush adds thick strokes of cadmium yellow, cadmium red, and white at the break between the peaks, where the sun is brightest. Then a round softhair brush adds curving strokes of this mixture to brighten the lower edges of the two top clouds. Notice how a few wisps of this mixture are added at the upper left to suggest windblown strips of cloud. Having defined the dark clouds more clearly, the bristle brush also solidifies the dark reflections of these clouds in the water. Moving horizontally, the bristle brush blends the tones of the water at the left and in the foreground to soften the shapes so that they won't distract attention from the more dramatic shapes in the sky. The tip of a small bristle brush adds a few scrubs of the cloud mixture beneath the evergreens at the extreme left to suggest the last few rays of the light falling on the grassy shore. No more details are added. The picture consists almost entirely of broad, simple shapes. It's particularly interesting to note that this sunset consists mainly of cool, subdued colors that frame a few areas of brighter color. Sunrises and sunsets are rarely as brilliant as most beginners paint them. At this time of day, most of the landscape is already in shadow, and most of the clouds are dark silhouettes. So the key to painting a successful sunrise or sunset is to surround your bright colors with these somber tones.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 1. A round softhair brush draws the major shapes of the composition with ultramarine blue, burnt umber, yellow ochre, and white, diluted with turpentine. The shapes of the trees are reflected in the pond, so they're repeated in the water, upside-down. The brush defines the trees rather casually, but carefully traces the outline of the pond—particularly the zigzag contour of the far shore. This zigzag line is important because it leads the eye back into the picture.

Step 2. This is one of those slightly overcast days when the sunlight shines through and lends a soft, golden glow to the sky and the water. Because the water reflects the color of the sky, these two areas are painted first. A big bristle brush covers the sky with broad strokes of yellow ochre, ultramarine blue, burnt umber, and lots of white. You can see that the sky is slightly darker at the right, where it contains just a bit more ultramarine blue and burnt umber. The water is painted with these same colors—becoming distinctly darker at lower right. Notice that the water is first painted with vertical strokes, followed by a few horizontal strokes to suggest glints of light in the foreground.

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Don't construct a kind of symmetrical "frame" that turns the center of the picture into a box. Here, you can see that the dark trees have been placed neatly around the sunlit rectangle of the lake and the distant foliage. The rectangle is right in the dead center of the picture. This is another one of those dull compositions.

Do place your "frame" off-center. Now the trees have been moved to the right, which means that the sunlit box between the trees is also farther to the right. And the sunlit focal point of the picture is now balanced by a dark tree at the left. This is obviously a more interesting composition.

Don't lead the eye out of the picture. The dark stream enters the composition at the bottom and winds around to the right, carrying the eye out past the right edge. You can make this same mistake with a road, a fence, or any compositional element that leads the eye across the landscape.

Do lead the eye into the picture and block any exit. Now the stream has been moved farther to the left. It still winds around to the right, but the eye is stopped from leaving the picture—those trees at the right side form a barrier. So the eye travels up the stream and then bounces back into the center of the composition.

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Trees in Side Light. When you paint any outdoor subject, it's important to determine where the light is coming from. The direction of the light will determine how much light and how much shadow appear on any subject—such as these trees. In this landscape, the light is coming from the left. Thus, the left sides of the foliage and the trunks are in sunlight, while the rest is in shadow. And shadows are cast on the ground to the right. This kind of lighting creates a strong contrast between light and shadow, giving the trees a dark, dramatic form.

Trees in 3/4 Light. Now the light is coming from the left, slightly *above* and slightly in *front* of the trees. More of the foliage is in light and less is in shadow. The cast shadows on the ground are also shorter because the sun is higher in the sky. These are the same trees you see in the preceding illustration, but the distribution of light and shadow is totally changed.

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Mountains in Back Light. The sun is low in the sky and behind the mountains. Just a bit of light creeps around the edges of the peaks, but they're almost entirely in darkness. This lighting effect is most common at sunrise and at sunset, when the big shapes of the landscape become dark silhouettes. Landscape painters often choose this type of lighting to create a dramatic mood.

Mountains in 3/4 Light. Now the light comes from slightly above the peaks and from the left. This enlarges the sunlit planes and reduces the shadow planes. The landscape is sunnier, but less dramatic. Try painting the same subject—whether it's trees, peaks, rocks, or whatever—at different times of the day to see how the light alters their forms.

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Stream in Perspective. The zigzag shape of this stream, cutting across the meadow, looks random and unpredictable. But the stream clearly moves back into the distance—the shapes obey the "laws" of linear perspective.

Diagram of Stream. According to the "laws" of linear perspective, parallel lines seem to converge as they approach the horizon. The diagram simplifies the stream into a series of oblong boxes. Notice how the sides of the boxes gradually converge as the oblong shapes approach the distant horizon. This is an effect you commonly see in railroad tracks, walls, and other geometric objects. But it's just as true when you're painting irregular forms such as a stream or a winding road.

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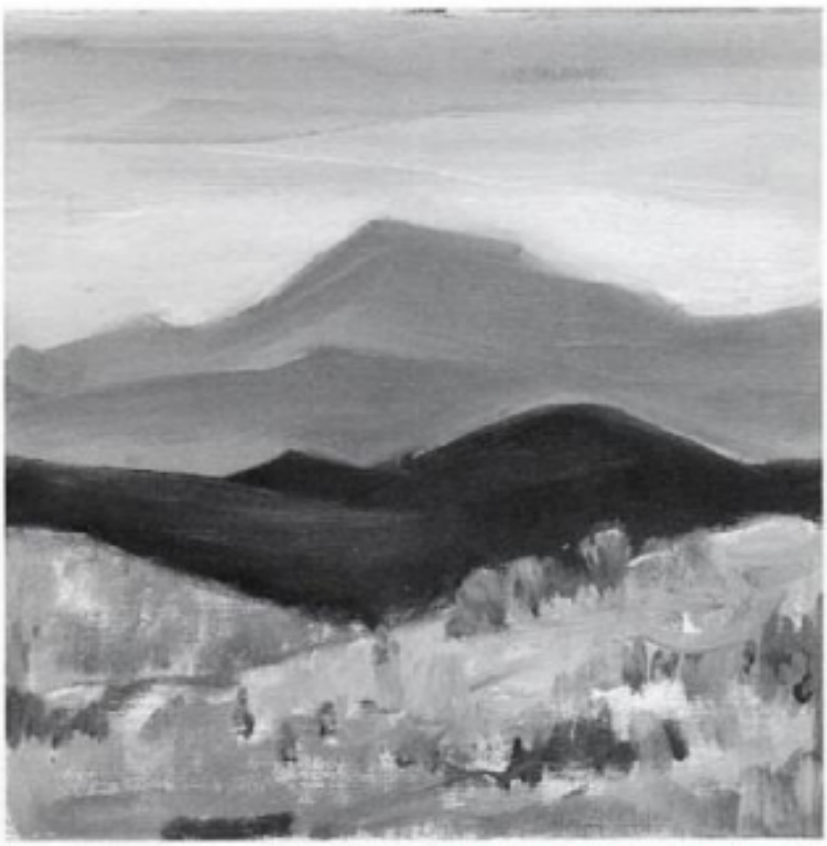

Mountain Range. Aerial perspective is actually much more common—and much more useful—in landscape painting than linear perspective. According to the "laws" of aerial perspective, near objects are brightest, exhibiting the most detail and the sharpest light and dark contrast; distant objects grow paler and less detailed, exhibiting less contrast between light and shadow. These phenomena are obvious in this mountain landscape, where the sunlit fields and the nearby slope are more distinct than the paler forms of the slopes in the distance.

Woods, Near and Far. The effects of aerial perspective are just as obvious in this woodland landscape. In the immediate foreground, you can see the details of grasses, weeds, trunks, branches, and twigs. The more distant trunks grow paler and less distinct. And the mass of trees in the remote distance becomes a pale blur.

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Old Tree. As you study any landscape, try to plan your brushstrokes to reflect the unique character of the subject. This rugged old tree is rendered with wavy, ragged strokes that emphasize the craggy texture of the bark. The lighter strokes are particularly thick, creating the feeling that the paint would be rough if you touched your fingertips to the surface of the canvas. The roughness of the paint actually reflects the roughness of the old tree.

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Step 1. The rugged old tree begins with a brush drawing that already reflects the character of the subject. The strokes are made with quick, choppy movements of the hand. The brush doesn't carry too much color, so the texture of the canvas breaks up the strokes and makes the brush mark seem more ragged.

Step 2. The tip of a small filbert reinforces the darks of the trunk and adds shadows with rough, ragged strokes. The brush doesn't move too carefully over the surface of the canvas, but makes erratic, jerky, scrubby movements. Thus, the strokes have a ragged, irregular quality that matches the weathered form and texture of the tree.

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Step 3. A flat softhair brush spreads a smooth, even sky tone around and behind the tree. The smoothness of this tone emphasizes the roughness of the tree by contrast. Then a bristle brush begins to scrub in the dark tones of the trunk, blurring and softening some of the original brushwork applied in Steps 1 and 2. So now the tip of a round softhair brush returns to reinforce some of the dark lines. The brush is pressed down hard, spreading the hairs so that the strokes have a more ragged quality. The round brush also re-establishes some of the dark branches at the right—which were obliterated by the tone of the sky.

Step 4. The dark trunk, branches, and twigs are completed with quick, choppy strokes of a small filbert and a round softhair brush. Then the filbert and the softhair alternate, applying thick lines of pale color over the darks to emphasize the sunlight falling on the weathered, irregular texture of the bark. These light strokes contain no painting medium. The color is thick, just as it comes from the tube. The strokes actually stand up slightly from the surface of the canvas. The texture of the paint appears to match the texture of the subject.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Step 1. The preliminary brush drawing is made with very fluid color diluted with enough turpentine to make the strokes flow smoothly and rhythmically. The round softhair brush carefully traces all the curving forms of this hilly landscape.

Step 2. The bristle brush now begins to model the forms in the foreground. Vertical strokes move down the shadowy side of the cliff at the lower right. At the left, a triangle of flat land is painted with horizontal strokes. Above this, the dark trees are modeled with short, rounded strokes that begin to match the round masses of the foliage.

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Step 3. The placid sky is covered with smooth, horizontal strokes that become almost invisible. The rounded forms of the distant hills are first painted with curving horizontal strokes. These are followed with short, vertical strokes that suggest the vertical, shadowy faces of the cliffs. The brush moves in rhythmic curves to match the rounded forms of the meadow. The flat portions of the meadow are rendered with straight, horizontal strokes.

Step 4. To reflect the growing forms of the trees, the dark strokes seem to spring upward from the ground. The pointed brush draws long, rhythmic, curving lines across the meadow and short, rhythmic lines for the treetrunks. The foreground is completed with scrubby strokes in which the brush is moved up and down to suggest the texture of the grass and weeds on the nearby hilltop.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

WENDON BLAKE

Oil Landscapes

Step by Step

Little else in the art world can provide the challenges and satisfaction of creating a successful landscape with oil paints. Whether beginners or long-time painters, artists who would like to paint their own landscape masterpieces will find this step-by-step guide an indispensable companion.

The heart of this beautifully illustrated, easy-to-follow book is a 32-page section in full color, which leads the reader easily through the stages of development of seven stunning (and varied) landscape paintings by the brilliant landscapist George Cherepov—at the same time providing necessary lessons on the painting of trees, mountains, meadows, streams, ponds, clouds, and sunsets. Included in this section are useful demonstrations of colors used for painting trees, sky, land, and water.

Readers will also find expert practical advice about selecting colors and media, brushes, palettes, and other equipment; about the varying uses of bristle and softhair brushes; and about some of the problems the beginning landscape artist may face in depicting trees, mountains, and snow. In addition, the author has provided a wealth of tested tips on selecting landscape subjects, composition, lighting, linear and aerial perspective, and ways to model and give texture to the landscape elements.

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